SERMON

Preached on the

FAST-DAY

November 13. 1678.

AT

St MARGARETS WESTMINSTER

Before the HONOURABLE HOUSE of

COMMONS

By EDWARD STILLINGFLEET, D. D. Dean of St. *Paul's*, and Chaplain in Ordinary to His Majesty

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LONDON,

Printed by *Margaret White*, for *Henry Mortlock* at the Phoenix in St. *Paul's* Church-Yard, and at the White Horse in *Westminster* Hall. 1678.

Jovis 14. *die* Novembris, 1678.

Ordered,

THAT the Thanks of this House be returned to Dr. *Stillingfleet*, Dean of St. *Paul's*, for his Sermon yesterday Preached before this House at St. *Margarets Westminster*: And that he be desired to Print his Sermon.

And Coll. *Titus* is desired to give him the Thanks of the House, and to acquaint him with the desire of this House to Print his Sermon.

Will Goldesbrough,
Cler. Dom. Com.

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1 Sam. 12. 24, 25.

Only fear the Lord, and ſerve him in truth with all your heart: for conſider how great things he hath done for you.

But if ye ſhall ſtill do wickedly, ye ſhall be conſumed both ye and your King.

IT hath been well obſerved by ſome, that thoſe who look at a diſtance upon humane affairs are apt to think that the good or bad ſucceſs of them depends wholly upon the Wiſdom and Conduct of thoſe who manage them; others who look nearer into them and diſcern the many intervening and unforeſeen accidents which often alter and diſappoint the Counſels of men, are ready to attribute the events of things rather to Chance than Wiſdom: but thoſe who have made the deepeſt ſearch and the ſtricteſt en-

Psal. 73. 17, 22. quiry, have most firmly believed a Divine Providence which over-rules all the Counsels and Affairs of men; and sometimes blasts the most probable designs, sometimes prospers the most unlikely attempts, to let us see that though *there be many devices in mens hearts, yet the Counsel of the Lord that shall stand.* Prov. 19. 21. We live in an age not over prone to admire and take notice of any remarkable instances of Divine Providence either in our preservation from dangers or deliverances out of them; for so great is the security of some men that they are unwilling to apprehend any danger till they fall into it, and if they escape will hardly believe they were ever in it; and such is the concernment of others to baffle all evidences of truth wherein their own guilt is involved, that they all agree in robbing God of the honour of his Mercy, and our selves of the comfort of his Protection. But blessed be that God who hath hitherto defeated all the secret, and subtile, and cruel designs of his and our Churches enemies; and hath given us the liberty and opportunity of this day to meet together to implore the continuance of his favour and mercy towards us in the preservation of His Majesties person; for in praying for him we pray for our selves, since our own welfare doth so much depend upon His.

When we look back upon the *History* of this *Church* ever since the *Reformation* of it, we may observe

serve such a wonderful *series* of Divine Providence going along with it, that we have the less reason to be discouraged with present difficulties or disheartned with the fears of future dangers. What struglings did it meet with in the Birth? And although it were therein like *Jacob who took hold of the heel of his Brother and at last obtained the blessing*; yet the Romish party got the start *like* Esau, *and came forth all red and hairy*, full of blood and cruelty; *and the old Dragon cast out of his mouth a Flood* of Fire to destroy our *Church* before it could attain to its full growth and maturity. But after it not only survived these flames, but enjoyed a firm establishment under the care and conduct of a wise and cautious Government, what restless endeavours, what secret plots, what horrid conspiracies, what foreign attempts, what domestick treasons were carried on during the Reign of Queen *Elizabeth*? And yet, which is very considerable, while she openly and heartily owned the *Protestant Cause*, it pleased *God* to deliver her out of all her dangers, and to give her a long and a prosperous Reign, when two of her Neighbour Princes were assassinated for not being zealous enough in the *Popish Cause* though they professed to own and maintain it. And it is but a very little time since you met together in this place to celebrate the memory of a mighty deliverance which Both *King* and *Kingdom*, and together with Gen. 25. 25.

them our *Church* received from that never to be forgotten conſpiracy of the *Gunpowder Treaſon* in her Succeſſors Reign. May we not then take up St. *Pauls* argument, and ſay, *Who hath delivered us*
2 Cor. 1. 10. *from ſo great death, and doth deliver, in whom we truſt that he will yet deliver us?*

Eſpecially if we do not fail in the performance of that duty which *God* expects from us in order to our own preſervation, which is delivered by *Samuel* to the *people* of *Iſrael*, in the words of the *Text*,

Only fear the Lord and ſerve him in truth with all your heart, for conſider how great things he hath done for you.

But if they would not hearken to this wiſe Counſel, but go on in their ſins, he tells them what the fatal conſequence would be, not to themſelves only, but to their *King* too,

But if ye ſhall ſtill do wickedly, ye ſhall be deſtroyed both ye and your King.

Which advice will appear to deſerve our ſerious conſideration this day, if we either regard (1.) The *Perſon* who gave it. (2.) The *Occaſion* of giving it. (3.) The *matter* contained in it.

1. The *Perſon* who gave this Counſel to the People, *Samuel*; a Perſon of great Wiſdom, and long experience in Government; and therefore very able to judge concerning the proper cauſes of a Nations Proſperity and Ruine. The People had

had enjoyed a long and uninterrupted tranquillity while they followed his directions. They had before been miserably haraſſed by the inroads of the *Philiſtins*, diſcomfited in ſeveral battels, and at laſt the *Ark* of *God* it ſelf taken by their enemies and their leaders deſtroyed, at which ſad news *Eli who had judged Iſrael forty years fell backwards* and ſo ended his dayes: while they were under the ſenſe of their preſent miſeries, *Samuel* puts them into the moſt hopeful way for their deliverance, which was by a *Reformation* of *Religion* among them, by *returning to the Lord with all their hearts, and putting away their ſtrange Gods, and preparing their hearts unto the Lord and ſerving him only*; and then, ſaith he, *he will deliver you out of the hands of the Philiſtins*. The miſeries they felt and the dangers they feared made them own the true Religion with more than uſual courage: *Then the Children of Iſrael did put away Baalim and Aſtaroth, and ſerved the Lord only*. But beſides this, *Samuel* appoints a publick and ſolemn Faſt of all *Iſrael* at *Mizpeh*; *And Samuel ſaid, Gather all Iſrael to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the Lord. And they gathered together to Mizpeh and drew water and poured it out before the Lord, and faſted on that day, and ſaid there We have ſinned againſt the Lord.* *Mizpeh*, a City in the confines of *Judah* and *Benjamin*, as *Maſius* and others obſerve, was the place where the *States* of *Iſrael* were wont to be aſſembled together upon any great and important occaſion;

1 Sam. 4. 11.
v. 18.
7. 3.
v. 4.
v. 5.
v. 6.
Maſ. in *Joſ.* 18. 21.

sion; where there was a place on purpose for
Drus. in Jud. 20. 1. them to meet in, and an *Altar*, and *House of Prayer* for the publick Worship of *God*: and therefore it is said, Judg. 20. 1. *The Children of Israel gathered together from one end of the Land to the other, unto the Lord in Mizpeh*; and there *the chief of all the Tribes of Israel presented themselves in the Assembly of the People of God.* And therefore *Samuel* chooseth this as the fittest place for them to *fast* and *pray*, and confess their sins in, and to implore the Mercy of God to the Nation. We do not read in Scripture of any more publick and solemn Fast of the *People* of *Israel* kept with greater signs of true humiliation than this at *Mizpeh* was; for the *pouring out of water* was used among them either to represent their own desperate condition without Gods help, that they were *as water spilt upon the ground*; or the greatness of their sorrow for their sins, and the floods of tears, which they shed for them. And to let mankind see what influence a General and serious Fasting and Humiliation hath upon the welfare of a Nation, we find from the day of this *Fast* at *Mizpeh* the affairs of *Israel* began to turn for the better. For the *Philistines* thought they had an advantage against the *Israelites* by this general meeting, and hoped to surprize them while they
1 Sam. 7. 7. kept their *Fast* in *Mizpeh*; and made such an incursion upon them, as put them into a great consternation; and they came trembling to *Samuel*,

praying

praying him that he would *not cease to cry unto the Lord their God for them, that he would save them out of the hand of the Philistins.* *Samuel* prays, the *Lord* hears, *Israel* marches out of *Mizpeh*, pursues the *Philistins* and smites them; and *Samuel* sets up a stone of remembrance, and calls it *Eben-Ezer*, *saying Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.* Yea from hence forward did God help them, for it follows, *so the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the Coast of Israel; and the hand of the Lord was against the Philistins all the dayes of Samuel.* Never any People had greater reason to be pleased with a Governour than they had with *Samuel*, who managed their affairs with so much wisdom and piety, with so much faithfulness and integrity, with so much courage and constancy, with so much care and industry, with so much success and prosperity. But people are apt to surfeit upon too much ease and plenty, and to grow wanton with abundance of peace; they began to be weary of *Samuels* Government, and secretly to wish for a change. And when mens discontents grow ripe, there seldom wants a plausible occasion to vent them: *Samuel was grown old* and could not go about *from year to year in circuit to Bethel, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh*, as he was wont to do, but he fixed *at his house in Ramah, and placed his Sons in Beersheba*; these not following their Fathers steps, were soon accused of male-administration; and nothing would

v. 8. v. 9. v. 11. v. 12. v. 13. v. 16. 1 Sam. 8. 2. v. 3.

would now satisfie the discontented *Elders* of *Israel*, but *Samuel* himself must be discharged of his Government; *For they gathered themselves together and* v. 4. *came to Samuel in Ramah; and said to him, Behold thou* v. 5. *art old, and thy Sons walk not in thy wayes*; this was their pretence, but their design was to alter the Government. Their plenty and prosperity had made them fond of the *Pomp* and *Grandeur* of their neighbour Nations, and whatever it cost them, they were resolved to have *a King to judge them like* From *v.* 10. to *v.* 19. *all the Nations*. *Samuel* tells them, what inconveniencies that more *absolute form* of *Government* of the neighbour *Nations* would bring among them, as *Josephus* shews; all which signified nothing to them; *Jose. An. l. 6. c. 4.* for it is said, *nevertheless the people refused to obey the* v. 19, 20. *voice of Samuel and said, Nay, but we will have a King over us, that we also may be like all the Nations*. It was not the Monarchical way of Government that was so displeasing to *God* or *Samuel*; for their Government was of that *Form* already, *God* himself being their *King*, and appointing such *Vicegerents* as he thought ch. 12. 13. fit to manage their affairs under him. So *God* an- 8. 7. swered *Samuel*, *They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them*. Not, as though Kingly Government were inconsistent with Gods Sovereignty over his people; for by him *Kings Reign*; and they are *his Ministers to us for good*, and that Government is the most agreeable to his own; and to the primitive institution of Gover-

vernment among men. But wherein then lay this great sin of the *Israelites in asking a King*, when God himself had provided by his Law that they should have a *King* when they were setled in their own Land? And yet we find the *Israelites* at last confess, *We have added unto all our sins this evil to ask us a King*. Their great fault was, that they were so impetuous and violent in their desires, that they would not wait for *Samuels* decease whom *God* had raised up among them, and whose Government had been so great a blessing to them; and therefore *God* looked on it as *a rejecting him more than Samuel*, since he had appointed him; and they had no reason to lay him aside for his Sons faults, but they made use of that only as a *colour* for their own self-willed humour and affectation of being like to other *Nations*. However *God* commands *Samuel* to yield to them; and he appoints another meeting at *Mizpeh* for this purpose; where the Person was chosen by lot; and at his solemn inauguration at *Gilgal*, *Samuel* makes that speech unto all *Israel* contained in this 12th Chapter; whereof the words of the *Text* are the conclusion; which make these words the more considerable,

Deut. 17. 14.

12. 19.

8. 7.

10. 17.

11. 15.

2. In regard of the *Occasion* of them; being delivered by *Samuel* at so great a solemnity in which he delivers up the *Government* into the hands of their *King*, (1.) With a great protestation of his own integrity, with an appeal to their own Con-

12. 3.

4. ſciences concerning it, and they freely give a large teſtimony of it. (2.) He upbraids them with their ingratitude towards *God* time after time; that they were never contented or pleaſed with his Laws or the Governours he raiſed up amongſt them; and now at laſt upon a ſudden fright concerning *Nahaſh* the *King* of *Ammon*, they were reſolved they would have a *King*; and *behold*, ſaith he, *the Lord hath ſet a King over you*. (3.) Notwithſtanding their ſin in ſo unſeaſonable a demand, yet he tells them they might be happy under his Government if they did ſincerely keep to their *eſtabliſhed Religion* and *obey the Laws of God*. This he delivers,

From v. 6, to 14.

(1.) More *Generally*, verſ. 14, 15. *If ye will fear the Lord and ſerve him, and obey his voice, and not rebel againſt the Commandment of the Lord, then ſhall both ye and alſo the King that reigneth over you, continue following the Lord your God*; *i. e.* God will protect and defend you. *But if you will not obey the voyce of the Lord, but rebel againſt the Commandment of the Lord, then ſhall the hand of the Lord be againſt you, as it was againſt your Fathers*. But this being a matter of the greateſt conſequence to them, whereon the welfare of the Nation did depend, he delivers it

(2.) More *Emphatically*; after the Thunder and Rain had affrightned and ſoftned their hearts; and v. 18, 19. they came praying to *Samuel* and confeſſing their v. 20, 21. ſin to him; then he counſels them *not to fear*, if they *did not forſake God*; and for his part, however they

they had diſobliged him, he would not only continue to pray for them, but give them the beſt advice and directions he could: *But I will teach you the good and the right way.* And then theſe words immediately follow, *Only fear the Lord and ſerve him in truth with all your heart,* &c. v. 23.

3. Theſe words are moſt conſiderable for the *Matter* contained in them; which lies in theſe three particulars,

(1.) The influence which continuance in ſin hath upon a Kingdoms ruine: *but if ye ſhall ſtill do wickedly, ye ſhall be conſumed, both ye and your King.*

(2.) The beſt means for the welfare and preſervation of it, *viz.* maintaining and practiſing the *true Religion*; *Only fear the Lord and ſerve him in truth with all your heart.*

(3.) The great argument and encouragement here given for the doing it; *for conſider how great things he hath done for you.*

The *firſt* of theſe will be the main ſubject of my preſent Diſcourſe, *viz.* The *influence* which *continuance in ſin* hath upon a *Kingdoms ruine.* If we believe *Moſes* and the *Prophets*, we cannot queſtion the truth of this concerning the *People* of *Iſrael*; for this is the main ſcope and deſign of their doctrine. *Moſes* aſſured them, that all the ſtrength, and force, and combination of their enemies ſhould do them no prejudice as long as they obeyed the *Laws* of *God*; but if they would not do his Commandments, but Lev. 26. from v. 3, to 14.

v. 15. deſpiſe his *Statutes* and abhor his *Judgements*, all the care and policy they could uſe would not be able to keep off the moſt diſmal judgements which
v. 16. ever befel a *Nation*, *I will even appoint over you terror, conſumption and the burning Ague; that ſhall conſume the eyes and cauſe ſorrow of heart; and ye ſhall ſow your ſeed*
v. 17. *in vain, for your enemies ſhall eat it. And I will ſet my face againſt you, and you ſhall be ſlain before your enemies: they that hate you ſhall reign over you, and ye ſhall flee*
v. 18. *when none purſueth you. And if you will not for all this hearken unto me, then will I puniſh you ſeven times more for your ſins*, ſo he proceeds to the end of the *Chapter*, ſtill riſing higher and higher according to the greatneſs of their provocations. And to the ſame purpoſe he ſpeaks throughout *Deut.* 28. promiſing great *Bleſſings* to their Nation upon obedience, and horrible *Curſes*, ſuch as would make ones ears tingle to hear them, upon their refractorineſs and diſobedi-
Deut. 28. 20. ence, *The Lord ſhall ſend thee curſing, vexation and rebuke, in all that thou ſetteſt thine hand unto for to do; until thou be deſtroyed, and untill thou periſh quickly, becauſe of the wickedneſs of thy doings, whereby thou haſt forſaken me.* To the ſame purpoſe all the *Prophets* ſpeak, only applying this general doctrine to the circumſtan-
Iſa. 1. 19, 20. ces of their own times. *If ye be willing and obedient*, ſaith *Iſaiah*, *ye ſhall eat the good of the Land; but if ye refuſe and rebel, ye ſhall be deſtroyed with the ſword, the mouth of the Lord hath ſpoken it.* When the Prophet *Jeremiah* ſaw dreadful calamities coming upon his people, he

he cries out, *Thy way and thy doings have procured these things unto thee, this is thy wickedness because it is bitter, because it reacheth unto thine heart.* Jer. 4. 18. *Ezekiel* tells them there was no hope to escape being destroyed, but by speedy and sincere Repentance, *Repent and turn your selves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your Ruine.* Ezek. 18. 30.

But here a material question may be asked, whether this connexion between their *doing wickedly* and *being consumed* were not by vertue of that Political *Covenant* between God and the people of *Israel* which was peculiar to themselves? and how far it may be just and reasonable to argue concerning the case of other *Nations*, with whom *God* hath entred into no such *Covenant*, as he did with them?

To make this clear, and to bring it nearer to our own case, I shall proceed in this method.

1. To shew, that God doth exercise a *particular providence* with respect to the *state* and *condition* of *Kingdoms* and *Nations*.

2. That according to the *usual method* of *Providence* their condition is better or worse as the *People* are.

3. That there are some *circumstances* of sinning, which do very much portend and hasten a *Peoples* ruine.

1. That God doth exercise a *particular providence* with a respect to the *state* and *condition* of *Nations*, *i. e.* as they are united into several and distinct bodies, which are capable as such of being happy

or

or miſerable. For ſince mankinds entring into *ſociety* is both neceſſary and advantageous to them; and *God* doth not barely permit and approve, but diſpoſe and incline men to it; and hath given them *Laws* to govern themſelves by, with reſpect to *ſociety*; it is but reaſonable to ſuppoſe that *God* ſhould call men to an account in that capacity; and to diſtribute rewards and puniſhments according to the nature of their actions: which muſt either be done in this world, or it cannot be done at all; for all thoſe bonds are diſſolved by death, and men ſhall not anſwer for their ſins by *Kingdoms* and *Nations* in another world, *but every man ſhall give account of himſelf unto God.* Either therefore thoſe *ſocieties* as ſuch ſhall go wholly unpuniſhed, or they muſt ſuffer according to them in this world; and therefore here the caſe is very different from that of particular Perſons. We ſay, and with a great deal of Reaſon, that it is no diſparagement to the Juſtice of Gods Providence for good men to ſuffer, or for wicked men to eſcape puniſhment in this Life, becauſe the great day of recompence is to come, wherein there will be a *Revelation of the Righteous judgement of God*: But that will not hold as to *Nations*, who ſhall not ſuffer in communities then as they have ſinned here: and therefore it is more reaſonable to ſuppoſe the rewards and puniſhments of ſuch ſhall be in this life according to the meaſure and proportion

portion of their sins. And of this we have sufficient evidence in Scripture, upon these accounts.

(1.) Because it charges *guilt* upon *Nations* as well as upon particular *Persons*. As in the case of *uncertain murder*, *If one be found slain in the Land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee to possess it, lying in the field, and it be not known who hath slain him*: the *Elders* of the *next City* were not only to protest their own *innocency*; but to use this prayer, *Be merciful O Lord, unto thy people Israel, whom thou hast redeemed, and lay not innocent blood unto thy people of Israels charge. And the blood shall be forgiven them, so shalt thou put away the guilt of innocent blood from among you.* Here we see the guilt of innocent blood goes farther than the bare shedders of it, it lyes upon the Nation till it be expiated; and the Jews say, the soul of a person innocently murdered hovers up and down the Earth crying for vengeance, till the guilty persons be found out and punished, and then it ascends above to its place of rest. The guilt of innocent blood is indeed a crying sin; it cryes loud unto Heaven for vengeance, and nothing stops its voice but the execution of it. And where that is not done, it leaves *a guilt upon the Land*; for *God* himself hath said it, *Blood defileth the Land; and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it.* This sin we see, is of such a malignant nature that it infects the Land where it is committed, and lyes upon it till it be expiated.

Deut. 21. 1. v. 7. v. 8. v. 9. Numb. 35. 33.

But

But there are other *sins* which contract a *National guilt*, when the *Authority* of a *Nation*, either gives too much countenance and encouragement to the practice of them, or does not take that care it ought to do to suppress and punish them. When men daily and insolently break the *Laws* of *God*, and bid as it were defiance both to them and to the *Laws* of men; when wickedness spreads like a *leprosie*, and infects the whole body; when vices become so notorious that they are a reproach and a by-word to Neighbour Nations; these are the signs and tokens of *National guilt*.

(2.) Because the *Scripture* tells us of a certain *Measure* to which the *sins* of a Nation do rise before they are ripe for punishment. This was the reason given why *Abrahams* Children must stay to the fourth *Generation* before they come to the possession of the promised *Land*, *for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.* Where it is plain that *God* doth consider Nations as distinct bodies, the measure of whose sins is taken after another manner than that of particular persons; but when once that measure is compleated, ruine and destruction is unavoidable; or at least, some signal and extraordinary judgements falling upon them as the punishment of their iniquities. Men may ask why the *Canaanites* in *Joshua*'s time were dealt with so severely, that nothing but utter extirpation would satisfie the Justice of God against them? But God

Gen. 15. 16.

prevents

prevents that objection, by letting *Abraham* know how much patience and long-suffering he used towards them; waiting till the fourth *Generation*; and when their *iniquities* still increased, and every Age added to the Guilt of the foregoing, the burden grew too heavy for them to bear it any longer, and therefore they must sink under the weight of it. So our Saviour saith to the Jews in his time, *Fill ye up then the measure of your Fathers.* Not as though God did punish any Age beyond the desert of its own sins; but when the measure of their sins is filled up, God doth no longer forbear to punish them; and that seldom happens, but when the sins of that time do exceed those of the foregoing *Generations*; as it was in the case of the *Jews* when their *City* and *Temple* were destroyed. Matth. 23. 32.

(3.) Because it attributes the great *Revolutions* of *Government* to a particular *Providence* of *God*, *God is the Judge*, or the supreme Arbitratour of the affairs of the world, *he pulleth down one and setteth up another.* Which holds with respect to *Nations* as well as particular persons. Which doth not found any right of Dominion, (as some fancied till the argument from *Providence* was returned with greater force upon themselves) but it shews that when God pleases to makes use of *Persons* or *Nations* as the *Scourges* in his hand to punish a *People* with, he gives them success above their hopes or expectations, but that *success* gives them no *right*. Psalm 75. 7.

And of this the *Psalmist* speaks when he adds, *For in*
v. 8. *the hand of the Lord there is a Cup and the Wine is red; it is full of mixture, and he poureth out of the same; but the dregs thereof all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them.* It is called by *Isaiah*, *the Cup of*
Is. 51. 17. *Fury*, and *the Cup of Trembling*, which *God* gives to *Nations* destined to ruine: which makes them like people intoxicated and deprived of that apprehension of danger, of that judgement and consideration to prevent it, which at other times they have. When a *Nation* is near some dreadful calamity, as a just punishment of its sins, *God* takes away the wisdom of the Wise, and the understanding of the Prudent, and the resolution of the men of courage, that they all stand amazed and confounded, not knowing how to give or take advice; but they are full of fears, and rather apt to quarrel with one another than to consult the general good. This was just the *state* of *Egypt* when *God* did purpose to execute his *justice* upon it.

Is. 19. 1, 3. (1.) First, their courage failed them, *And the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it; and the spirit of Egypt shall fail in the midst thereof. In that day shall*
16. *Egypt be like unto women; and it shall be afraid and fear, because of the shaking of the hand of the Lord of Hosts, which he shaketh over it.* It is a very ill sign when men want the spirit and vigour they were wont to have; when they are daunted at the apprehension of every danger, and rather meanly seek to save them-

themselves by base arts and sordid compliances, than to promote the common welfare. It is folly and stupidity not to apprehend danger when there is cause for it, and to take the best care to prevent it; but it is a fatal symptom upon a *Nation* when their *hearts fail them for fear*, that they dare not do the duty which they owe to *God*, to their *King*, and to their *Countrey*. God forbid that any should exceed the bounds of their duty to prevent their fears, but when men want resolution to do that, they are in a lost condition.

(2) Their *Counsels* were divided and infatuated: *And I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians.* v. 2. *The Princes of Zoan are Fools, the Counsel of the Wise Counsellors of Pharaoh is become bruitish; they have also seduced Egypt, even they that are the stay of the Tribes thereof.* 11. 13. *The Lord hath mingled a perverse spirit in the midst thereof, and they have caused Egypt to err in every work thereof, as a reeling man staggereth in his vomit, i. e.* they know not what to fix upon, all their Counsels being so uncertain, and the best taking no effect. But after all their consultations, they advance not one step forward, but fall back just to the same case they were in before; every one blaming another for want of success in their designs. This is the deplorable state of a People when ruine and desolation is near them. 14.

But on the other side, when *God* raises up a *Nation* to be a Scourge to other *Nations*, he inspires them

with a new ſpirit and courage, unites their counſels, removes their difficulties or carries them eaſily through them, and by a concurrence of ſome happy circumſtances gives them ſtrange ſucceſs beyond all their hopes and expectations. Look over all the mighty Revolutions which have happned in the *Kingdoms* and *Empires* of the *World*, and the more ye ſearch and conſider and compare things together, the greater truth you will find in this obſervation. When *God* deſigned to puniſh the *Eaſtern Nations* for their tranſgreſſions, then the *Babylonian Monarchy* roſe ſo faſt and ſpread ſo far, that nothing was able to ſtand before it. The
Je. 27. 3. combinations of the *Kings* of *Judah*, and *Edom*, and *Moab*, and *Tyre*, and *Sidon*, and *Egypt* were but like *the Withes which the* Philiſtins *bound* Sampſon *with, which he brake in ſunder as a thred of Tow is broken when*
Ju. 16. 9. *it toucheth the fire.* *Judah* drinks firſt of the *Cup*, and ſhe trembles and falls, and is carried into captivity; then follow, as *God* had foretold by his *Prophets*, the deſolations of *Tyre*, of *Egypt*, of *Put* and *Lud*, *i. e.* of *Libya* and *Æthiopia*; and at laſt the Cup paſſes round, and *Ninivehs* turn comes to drink deep of this *Cup* of *Fury*, and ſhe was laid waſte for returning to her ſins after Repentance.

Jer. 25. from 18. to 26. Eze. 24. 2, &c. 30. 5. Nah. 3. 8, 9. Zeph. 2. 13.

And when the ſins of *Babylon* called for vengeance, God raiſed up *Cyrus*, and called him by his
Is. 45. 2, 3. *Name*, long before he was born, and brought the fierce Nations of the *Eaſt* to ſubmit themſelves to him:

him: and when *Babylon* was most secure, full of Wine and Jollity at an anniversary feast, he led *Cyrus* into the *City* by a way they dreamed not of, and all the plagues which the *Prophets* had foretold, came upon that people when they least expected them. It was not the *Courage* and *Spirit* of *Alexander* with his *Macedonian Army* could have made such sudden and easie conquests of the *East*; if *God* by his Providence had not strangely made way for his success by infatuating the *Counsels* of *Darius*, so as to give him those advantages against himself he could never have hoped for. There is no such mighty difference in the wits and contrivances of men; no such great advantages in military power and conduct; no such wonderful disproportion in the courage, or wisdom, or educations of men; but when *God* hath pleased to let loose the most rude, and barbarous, and unexperienced Nations in matters of War, upon the most flourishing Kingdoms, the most disciplin'd Armies, the most fortified Cities, they have in spite of all opposition over-run, overcome, and overthrown them. Who could have thought that the cowardly *Goths* (as they were then esteemed) the barbarous *Vandals*, and the despicable *Hunns*, could have made such havock and devastations in the *Roman Empire*, that in fifty years time, more of it was lost and destroyed by their means, than had been gained in a thousand? It would make ones heart bleed to read the miseries which all

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the parts of the *Roman Empire* suffered, where these *Barbarians* prevailed; and yet they were despised and reproached by the *Grave* and *Wise Romans* at the same time when they were Conquered and destroyed by them; as *Salvian* who lived then, at large relates. But the best and wisest men could not but see an extraordinary hand of God going along with them; and one of their greatest *Generals* found himself carryed on by such a mighty impulse, and met with such an unaccountable success in all his undertakings, that he called himself *Flagellum Dei*, The *Scourge in Gods hand* to chastise the wickedness and follies of men that called themselves *Christians*, and did not live like such. *Machiavel* himself takes notice of so strange a difference in the Conduct and success of the *Romans* at different times, that he saith, *they could hardly be imagined to be the same People*; and after all his attempts to find out other causes, he at last is forced to conclude that there is a *superiour cause* to the Counsels of men which governs the affairs of mankind, which he calls *Fate*, and we much better, the *Providence of God*. Some learned *Physicians* are of opinion that when diseases are not curable by common remedies, there is in them τὸ θεῖον, something divine, and therefore in such cases *Divine Remedies* are the most proper and effectual: thus in the alterations of *States* and *Kingdoms*, there is often a τὸ θεῖον, a more than ordinary *hand* of *God*, in which cases

Salvian. de Gub. Dei, l. 7.

Disput. in Liv. l. 2. c. 29.

H. Jordanus de eo quod in morbis est divinum. Conring. Epist. 29.

cases the best means we can use to prevent danger is by *Fasting* and *Prayer*, by true repentance and speedy *Reformation* of our evil wayes.

(4.) Because the Scripture still leaves hopes of Mercy to a People where they have a heart to repent. I do not find by any declaration of Gods Will in Scripture, that he hath made any such peremptory decree concerning the ruine of a Nation, but upon their repentance there is a way left to escape it; but rather the contrary in those words of *Jeremiah*, *At what instant I shall speak concerning a Nation, and concerning a Kingdom, to pluck up and to pull down and to destroy it: If that Nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil which I thought to do unto them.* And therefore all threatnings of that kind are conditional as this in the Text is, *But if ye shall still do wickedly*: which implyes that if they did cease to do so, they might be preserved, both they and their King. And where repentance hath intervened between the threatning and execution of judgement, God hath shewed wonderful kindness either in stopping, removing, or deferring the severity of judgements. Jer. 18. 7, 8.

1. In *stopping* his *hand* when it hath been *lifted up*, and just ready to *strike*. We can desire no clearer instance in that case than that of *Niniveh*; a vast City (or rather a Countrey inclosed in *Walls*) full of all the delights of *Asia*, and of the sins Jonah 3. 3.

which

which usually attend them; to this City God sends a Prophet to let them know how near they were to destruction, that *they had but forty dayes time* to turn themselves in. This was a strange and unexpected alarm to them, given by a strange Prophet after a peremptory manner to a people unacquainted with such messages. How many objections would the Infidels and Scepticks of our Age have made against such a Message as this? They would rather have concluded the Prophet *Mad*, than have been perswaded to repent by him. Yet so great was the apprehension they had of the just desert of their sins, that the *People*
v. 5. of *Nineveh believed God and proclaimed a Fast, and put on Sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least*:
v. 8. *and they cryed mightily to God, and turned from their*
v. 10. *evil wayes*: And what then? Would God disparage the reputation of his *Prophet*, and alter the sentence he had sent him so far to denounce against them? What hopes had he given them of mercy if they repented? It appears they had nothing
v. 9. but general presumptions, *Who can tell, if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger that we perish not?* Yet sincere repentance being performed upon no greater assurance than this, prevailed so with God, *that he repented of the evil that he said he would do unto them, and he did it not.* O the depth of the riches both of the *Wisdom* and *Goodness* of *God*! His *Wisdom* in leading them to repentance;

pentance; his *Goodneſs* in forbearing to puniſh after ſo great provocations. What encouragement doth God hereby give to others to repent, when *Niniveh* was reſcued from the very brink of deſtruction by it?

2. In *removing* his *hand* when it hath *ſtruck*. When *Davids* vanity tranſported him ſo far, that without any neceſſity he would know the *Number* of his *People*; his *heart* did miſgive him as ſoon as he had done it, *and he confeſſed he had ſinned greatly in it*; notwithſtanding this *God* ſends a plague among the People, which touched *David* to the quick, as a tender *Father* is moſt ſenſibly puniſhed in the *loſs* of his *Children*; and *then he cryed, Lo I have ſinned, and I have done wickedly; but theſe Sheep what have they done?* And when the *Angel had ſtretched out his hand upon Jeruſalem to deſtroy it, the Lord repented him of the evil, and ſaid to the Angel It is enough, ſtay now thy hand.* Behold therefore the *goodneſs and ſeverity of God*; on them which fell *ſeverity*; but towards *Jeruſalem goodneſs*. His *ſeverity* was intended to make people avoid a vain confidence in their own *ſtrength* and *numbers*; his *goodneſs* to let them ſee how ready he is to draw back his hand when men truly repent. 2 Sam. 24. 10. v. 17.

3. In *putting* by the *ſtroke* for the preſent, or deferring the execution of his wrath. No *King* of *Iſrael* provoked *God* more than *Ahab*; for it is ſaid of him, *that he did evil in the ſight of the Lord above all* 1 King. 16. 30.

that were before him; and that he sold himself to work
33. *wickedness in the sight of the Lord.* At last the Prophet
21. 25. *Elijah* meets him in *Naboths* Vineyard which he had just taken possession of by fraud and violence; when *Ahab* saw such an unwelcome Guest in that place, his guilt made him ready to start back, and
20. to say, *Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?* The Prophet having this fair opportunity followed the blow he had given him so home, that *Ahab* was not able to stand before him: for it is said, that when *Ahab* heard the terrible judgements *God* denounced against him for his sins, *he rent his clothes,*
v. 29. *and put sackcloth upon his flesh and fasted, and* in good earnest *humbled himself before God*; For so *God* himself owns that he did. I do not say he continued good after this; but he now heartily repented for the time; and for the time of repentance God inlarged his time of forbearance. *Because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days.* Even a short repentance, when sincere, gains time, by a reprieve from punishment. When the sins of a *Nation* are grown to a great height, and become ripe for vengeance, the best Princes can obtain no more than not seeing *the evil in their own days*, as in the case of *Josiah* who was an excellent *Prince*, and a true lover of *God* and his *Law*, yet the *people* continued so hardned in their sins, though under some shew of *Reformation*; that the *Propheteſs* told him; *behold*
2 King. 22. 16. *I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the Inhabitants thereof,*

thereof, &c. *But because his heart was tender, and he humbled himself before the Lord*, he obtained that favour, *that his eyes should not see the evil which he would bring upon them.* If the People had been as good as *Josiah* was, there is no question, but even then God would have repented of the evil; but where there was such an obstinate impenitency, that neither Gods Laws, nor the Prophets threatnings, nor the Princes example could prevail upon them; all that his humiliation could obtain, was only a putting it off for his own time; and we have reason to think that their sins did hasten his end too; as sometimes the sins of a people make the best of Princes to be taken away from them: and when the ten Tribes were carried captive, their King *Hoshea* is said, *not to have done evil as the Kings of Israel that were before him.* And to *Judah* after *Josias* his death, God punctually made good this threatning in the Text, *But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed both ye and your King.*

19. 20. 2 King. 17. 2.

II. The second particular is, That according to the usual method of *Providence* the state or condition of a *People* is better or worse according to the general nature of their *Actions.* If they be good and vertuous, careful to please God, just, sober, chast, merciful, diligent observers of Gods Laws, and their own, and dealing with other Nations according to the Laws of Nations, they will live in a much more flourishing and happy condi-

tion; than a Nation can do where Atheism, Profaneness, and all sorts of Wickedness abound: which I shall prove two ways,

(1.) *Absolutely*, from the tendency of Religion and Vertue to promote the Honour, the Peace, the Courage and safety of a People.

(2.) *Comparatively*, that Nations are more or less happy according to their vertues and vices.

(1.) *Absolutely*, and that will appear, (1.) From the tendency of true Goodness and Piety to promote a Nations *Honour* and *Interest* abroad. And no man is ignorant how much *Reputation* brings of real advantage to a Nation; and that a People despised are next to a People enslaved; and that it is impossible to hold up honour and esteem in the world, where the reputation of Vertue is lost.

(2.) From its tendency to maintain *peace* and *tranquillity* at home; preventing private quarrels, by justice, and honesty, and temperance, and chastity; and publick disturbances by avoiding idleness, and debauchery, and bad principles, which are the great nurseries of Rebellion; and teaching men quietness, patience, due government of themselves, and obedience *not only for wrath, but also for Conscience sake*. Whereas loose principles, and bad practises, and extravagant desires naturally dispose men to endeavour changes and alterations, in hopes of bettering themselves by them; and the prevalency of Vice doth unhinge

hinge Government, and weaken the strength and sinews of it.

(3.) From the keeping up the *spirits*, and securing the safety of men. A good Conscience makes a man dare to do his duty; but *the sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness hath surprised the Hypocrites.* Is. 33. 14. These were men, saith *Grotius*, who carried a fair shew for the present, but were inwardly prepared, if the *King* of *Babylon* got the better, to be of his *Religion*, whatever it was. Such men who are false to God, and really of no Religion at all, are full of thoughts and fears, not knowing what may happen; they dare not own what they would be, for fear it ruine them at present; and they dare not appear too much for what they seem to own, for fear of what may come hereafter. *If the Lord be God*, saith *Elijah*, *then follow him*; *but if Baal, then follow him*: No, say such men, if they durst speak their thoughts, we desire to be excused at present, we find there is a contest between them, and we do not yet know which will get the better, when we see that, you shall know our minds. As *Asinius Pollio* told *Augustus* in his Wars with *Antony* he was resolved to be *præda victoris*, he would be of the Conquerors side. But men that are sincere in any Religion, do hate and abhor such hypocritical Dissemblers, and despise and spue them out for their nauseous lukewarmness; and as men indeed of no Religion or Conscience, but for what 1 King. 18. 21.

serves

ſerves to their preſent ends. But obſerve in what a lofty ſtrain the Prophet ſets forth the ſecurity and confidence which follows integrity. *He that*
v. 15. *walketh righteouſly and ſpeaketh uprightly, he that deſpiſeth the gain of oppreſſions, that ſhaketh his hands from holding bribes, that ſtoppeth his ears from hearing of blood,*
v. 16. *and ſtoppeth his eyes from ſeeing evil. He ſhall dwell on high, his place of defence ſhall be the munition of rocks, bread ſhall be given him, his waters ſhall be ſure.* Theſe were very critical and doubtful times which the Prophet ſpeaks of, and many were ſecretly for complying with the *King* of *Aſſyria*, as believing it as impoſſible to withſtand his force, as *to dwell with everlaſting burnings*; the Prophet is ſo far from granting this, that he tells them all their ſecurity lay in being juſt and honeſt, and doing their duty, and then they would be as ſafe, as if they had conſtant proviſion among the moſt inacceſſible Rocks. It is obſervable concerning the *Iſraelites*, that when they went about to ſecure themſelves by ſubtile devices and contrivances of their own, making leagues and confederacies with the *King* of *Egypt* and other neighbour Princes, ſo often they were foiled, and baffled, and overcome by their enemies; but when they put their truſt in *God*, and committed themſelves to his protection, he preſerved and delivered them from the greateſt dangers. I will not deny that there was ſomething peculiar in their caſe, having the Prophets directi-

ons;

ons; and to trust mans wisdom against Gods was madness and folly in them. But setting that aside, as there is no security like to Gods protection, so there is no reason to think that will be wanting to them who do their duty sincerely and put their trust in him.

(2.) *Comparatively*; If we do compare several Nations together, we shall find those to flourish most, and to be the most happy where men do most *fear God and work righteousness*; where piety and vertue have the greatest countenance and incouragement; and where vice and wickedness are the most discouraged and punished.

This may seem a *Paradox* at first hearing to those who consider by what ways of fraud and violence, of injustice and cruelty, of rapine and oppression, the great and mighty Empires of the world have been raised and maintained; and how little regard is shewed to any rules of Honesty, Justice, or the Laws of Nations in those Kingdoms and States which resolve to be great, and in spight of other Nations to maintain their Greatness.

Yet notwithstanding this plausible objection, the truth of my assertion will appear, if we understand it as we ought to do with these following Cautions.

1. That it is not to be understood of the largeness of dominion, or superfluity of riches, but

but of the true happiness of living in society together; which is by promoting the real *good* of all. To which the vastness of Empire, and immensity of riches is by no means necessary, but a sufficiency both of strength and treasure to defend it self in case of foreign enemies, and to provide for the necessities and conveniencies of all the Members of it. Those who have best considered these things, suppose that to be the most exact and perfect Idea of Government, where all things are in a certain measure, and have a proportion to each other so as most conduces to the true end of living; not to riot and luxury, not to softness and effeminacy, not to pride and ambition, not to the heaping up of riches without use and respect to a general good; but so as all men may according to their conditions and circumstances enjoy what they have, or can get, with the greatest comfort to themselves and their friends, and do the most generous and vertuous actions.

Arist. Pol. l. 4. c. 11.

2. That this is not to be understood of the private benefit of any particular persons, but of the *general good* of all sorts and conditions of men. The Eastern Monarchies have seemed to be the most happy and flourishing to those who look at a distance upon them, and only observe the *Pomp* and *Grandeur* of their *Princes*, without looking into the *State* and *Condition* of the *People*. *Aristotle* observes, that *the Eastern people had more wit and slavery*

Polit. l. 3. c. 14.

with

with it, the Northern had less quickness and more liberty, the Greeks lying between both had their share in both. But the *Eastern slavery* hath brought *Barbarism* into *Greece* it self; and the *Northern Liberty* hath so improved the wits, and given such encouragement to the industry of men, that our people at this day enjoy more benefit by the riches of the *East*, than those do among whom they grow. Can we call them a happy people that see much riches and enjoy none; having nothing which they can call their own, unless it be their slavery? That is certainly the happiest condition of a people, where the Prince sits upon the Throne of Majesty and Power, doing righteousness and shewing kindness; and the people sit *every man under his Vine, and under his Fig-tree*, enjoying the fruits of his own labours, or his Ancestors bounty: Where the People think it their interest to support and obey their Prince; and the Prince thinks it his interest to protect and defend his people. *Happy is the People that is in such a case*; but above all, *happy is that People whose God is the Lord.* For without his Blessing, the best Government, the best Laws, the best Ministers can never preserve a Nations happiness; and there is no reason to expect his Blessing, but in the wayes of Piety and Vertue. Psa. 144. 15.

3. That it is not to be understood of sudden and surprizing events, but of a *lasting* and *continued state.* For when *God* hath been highly provoked

to punish several Nations for their sins; he may give unexpected success to that *Nation* by whom he designs to punish the rest; and when they have done that work, they may then suffer more smartly for their own iniquities. Of this we have a remarkable instance in *Scripture*; God designed to punish the *Kingdoms of the earth for their sins*; to this purpose he raiseth up *Nebuchadnezar King of Babylon*, whom he therefore calls *his Servant*; and the first example of his severity was his *own People*; when this was done, then follow the desolations of *Egypt*, of *Phœnicia*, *Arabia*, and other Countries in so strange a manner, that some have called it *the Age of the destruction of Cities*. But doth the King of *Babylon* think to escape himself? No, saith the Prophet, *the King of Sheshach shall drink after them*; his turn would come at last, when he had accomplished the design God sent him upon in the punishment of others. Thus for a time, a Nation may seem to flourish exceedingly, and be victorious over others while they are as *Scourges in Gods hand* for the punishment of others, and when that work is over may suffer most severely for their own sins.

Jer. 25. 26. v. 9. 11. *Marsh. Chr. Can. p.* 556. Jer. 25. 15. v. 26.

4. It is to be understood of Persons under *equal circumstances*, when we compare the condition of People with each other: not the Nobles of one Nation with the Peasants of another, nor the Princes with the People; but every rank and order

der of men with those of the same rank and condition.

And upon these terms, we need no other proof of the truth of this assertion, than the instance in the *Text* of the *People* of *Israel*; which will best appear by comparing the state of both *Kingdoms* after the *Body* of the *People* was broken into the *Kingdoms* of *Israel* and *Judah*. The *Kingdom* of *Israel* by *Jeroboams* Policy, and for *Reason* of *State*, fell off from the *Worship* of the true God, and worshipped *the Calves of Dan and Bethel*. But did they prosper or succeed more than the *Kingdom* of *Judah*? The ten Tribes had a much larger territory, yet the *Kingdom* of *Judah* was stronger and flourished more, and continued longer, by 135 years, than the *Kingdom* of *Israel* did; and when they were carried into *Captivity*, the ten Tribes were lost as to their name and interest among the *People* of *Assyria*; but the *two Tribes* were restored after 70 years Captivity under the *Princes* of the *Line* of *David*. If we compare the *Kings* of *Israel* and *Judah* together; The *Posterity* of *David* was kept up among the *Kings* of *Judah*; but there were nine Families in the *Kingdom* of *Israel*; and but one of them lasted to the fourth Generation, and that was of *Jehu*, who did something towards the *Reformation* of *Religion*. Of the eighteen *Kings* of *Israel*, but eight escaped dying by the Sword: and it is easie to judge how miserable the *state* of that *People* must

be, under so many violent changes of Government. Among the *Kings* of *Judah* those who were firmest to the true Religion prospered most, and the *Nation* under them enjoyed the greatest peace, or received the greatest deliverances, as in the dayes of *Asa*, *Jehoshaphat* and *Hezekiah*. If we compare the times of the same *Kings* together, we shall find that while they adhered firmly to *God* and *Religion* the *Nation* prospered exceedingly, as for a long time under the *Reigns* of *Solomon* and *Asa*; but when in their old Age they began to warp in their Religion and to decline in their Piety, nothing but trouble and confusion followed. So true did they find the saying of *Hanani* to *Asa*, *The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him.* But because he said, *he had done foolishly in not relying on the Lord, but on the King of Syria, therefore,* saith he, *from henceforth thou shalt have wars.* And from that time his Government was uneasie both to himself and his People; when he had imprisoned the Prophet for reproving him.

2 Chro. 16. 9.

v. 10.

III. That there are some *circumstances* in the *sins* of a *Nation*, which do very much portend and hasten its Ruine. As,

1. When they are committed after more than ordinary mercies received; such as in reason ought to keep men most from the commission of them;

as

as greater knowledge of the *Will* of *God* than other *People* enjoy; more frequent warnings of their danger than others have had; many and great deliverances which *God* hath vouchsafed; when none of these things, nor all of them together do move a People to repent, they shew an obstinate and incorrigible temper, and therefore *God* may sooner proceed to punish them. God did not forbear to punish other Nations for their transgressions, but he began with his own People. *For lo I begin to bring evil on the City which is called by my name, and should ye be utterly unpunished?* Jer. 25. 29. The *destroying Angels* in *Ezekiel*, *were to begin at the Sanctuary*; Eze 9. 6. *Judgement*, saith St. *Peter*, *must begin at the House of God.* 1 Pet. 4. 17. He draws the line of his Justice parallel to that of his Mercy; and when every Mercy is put to the account, and heightens the guilt, the summ will soon rise so high to call for execution. The Prophet *Amos* tells *Damascus*, and *Gaza*, and *Tyre*, and *Edom*, and *Ammon*, and *Moab*, that none of them shall escape being punished for their transgressions; they need not doubt, the Rod would come time enough upon them; but yet God would begin with his own Children: *You only have I known of all the Families of the earth, therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.* Amos Where God hath given wonderful marks of his kindness, and many deliverances time after time, and yet they continue to *do wickedly*, there is the

greater

greater reason to expect sharper and severer punishments.

2. When they are committed with more than ordinary contempt of God and Religion. All Ages are bad enough; and every Age is apt to complain of it self, as the worst of any; because it knows more ill of it self, than of the foregoing. But yet there is a difference in the manner of sinning; sometimes the stream of wickedness hides its head, and runs under ground, and makes little noise, although it holds on the same course; at other times it seems to break forth like a mighty torrent as though it would bear down all before it, as though the fountains of the great Deep were broken up, and Hell were let loose, and the Prisoners there had shaken off their chains and come up upon the earth; When Atheism, Prophaneness and all manner of Wickedness grow impudent and bare-faced; when men do not only neglect Religion, but reproach and contemn it. *Shall I not visit* Jer. 5. 9, 29. *for these things, saith the Lord, shall not my soul be avenged on such a Nation as this?* God did forbear his *People* of *Judah* beyond what they could have expected, waiting for their amendment; but when they added impudence to their obstinacy, when they made *sport* with the *Prophets*, and turned their threatnings into songs of mirth and drollery, then the peremptory decree came forth, and Chron. 36. 16. there was no hopes to escape. *But they mocked the messengers*

messengers of God and despised his Words, and misused his Prophets, untill the wrath of the Lord arose against his People, till there was no remedy. There still seemed to be some hopes left till they came to this temper. But when they *burlesqued* the Prophet *Jeremiahs words*, and turned the expressions he used into *ridicule*, crying in contempt, *The burden of the Lord*, which is called *perverting the words of the living God*: when they turned *Ezekiels words* into *pleasant songs*, and made sport with *Gods Judgements*, no wonder he was so highly provoked. For there can be no worse symptom to a people, than to laugh at the only means to cure them; and if this once grow common, it must needs make their condition desperate. For then it comes to Gods turn to mock and laugh too; *Because I have called and ye have refused, I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my Counsel, and would have none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh.* Wo be unto that people whom the Almighty takes pleasure in punishing.

Jer. 23. 34, 36.

Ezek. 33. 31. *In canticum oris sui vertunt illos.* Vul. Lat.

Pro. 1. 24. 25. 26.

3. When there is an universal degeneracy of all ranks and conditions of men. I do not mean such as is common to humane nature, but from the particular vertues of their Ancestors, or a common practice of those vices which do most frequently draw down the judgements of God, and make him to have *a controversie with a Land.*

Hos. 4. 2, 3. *Land. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing Adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood, therefore shall the Land mourn.* It was a strange degree of corruption the *People* of *Jerusalem* were fallen to before God led them into Captivity; when the *Prophet Jeremiah* used those expressions Jer. 5. 1. to them, *Run ye to and fro in the streets of Jerusalem, and see now and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgement, that seeketh the truth, and I will pardon it.* Could there ever be a fairer or kinder offer than Is. 1. 5, 6. this? But as *Isaiah* expresseth it, *the whole head was sick, and the heart faint; from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it, but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores.* It seems a very strange Lev. 13. 12, 13, 14. passage in the *Law* of *Leprosie*, that if the *Leprosie covered all the flesh, the person was to be pronounced clean; but if any raw flesh appeared, he was unclean:* which it is very hard to understand, unless it were that the power of infection was then gone. Such a state the *People* of *Jerusalem* seemed to have been in, there was no room for infection left, the plague of Leprosie had so over-run them, that there was no sound part left in the whole body.

Thus I have considered the influence which *doing wickedly* hath upon the *ruine* of a *Nation*, it remains now that I make Application of this to our own case.

We

We have been a People that have received wonderful Mercies and many signal Deliverances from Gods hand. He hath placed us in a rich and fruitful Land; and hath furnished us with so great plenty, that even that hath been thought our burden; hath blessed us with such an increase of Trade, that our Merchants far exceed those of *Tyre* both in Riches and Number. Our Ships of Trade are like a Valley of Cedars when they lie at home; and when they are abroad, they compass the earth, and make the riches of the *East* and *West-Indies* to meet in our Streets. And since like the *Prince* of *Tyre*, *our seat is in the midst of the Seas*, God hath thereby secured us from such sudden inroads and invasions of foreign Enemies as many of our Neighbour Countries do groan under at this day: where the miseries of War are felt before they are seen; and those who thought themselves at ease and quiet, may be surprised in their Beds, and before they are aware of it may themselves, and Families, and Goods, and Houses and Country be all burnt and consumed together. But God hath compassed us about with a deep Sea and a large Channel, and given us such a powerful Navy as may be both a Defence at home and a Terror abroad.

As to our Civil Constitution, if we consider the admirable Temper of our Government, the Justice and Wisdom of our Laws, and the greatness of our Liberties, we have no reason to envy the

condition of any people upon earth. And after all our inteſtine broils and confuſions which our ſins had brought upon us, God was pleaſed in a moſt ſurpriſing manner, without War or bloodſhed, to our great ſatisfaction and the amazement of the world, to reſtore our Soveraign to his Throne, our Church and People to their juſt Rights and Liberties. And while our Neighbour Nations have lamentably ſuffered under all the diſmal effects of a laſting War, he hath enlarged our Trade, continued our Peace, and thereby increaſed our proſperity, after we had ſmarted under a dreadful Fire and a raging Peſtilence. Thus far all things tend ſtill to make us a happy Nation, if we did know and value our own happineſs.

But that which above all other things ſhould make us ſo, hath been the great Occaſion of our Trouble, and is ſtill of our Fears, and that is *Religion*. And yet in this reſpect we have advantages above any other *Nation* in the *Chriſtian World*, having a *Church* reformed with ſo much *Wiſdom* and *Moderation* as to avoid the dangerous extreams on both ſides. But even this hath enraged our *Adverſaries* of the *Roman Church*, and made them the more reſtleſs to deſtroy it; and to ſtick at no means which they thought might tend to its ruine. *O Bleſſed Jeſus!* that ever thy Holy Name ſhould be aſſumed by *Traytors* and *Murderers*; or that the promoting

promoting thy true *Religion* ſhould be made the *colour* for the moſt wicked practiſes!

Not that the pure and peaceable *Religion* of *Jeſus Chriſt* doth ſowre and imbitter the Spirits of Men towards each other, or diſpoſe them to malice, hatred, revenge and cruelty (ſome of the worſt paſſions of humane nature) or to the accompliſhing their own ends by ſecret conſpiracies and open violence, by treachery and falſhood, by *Murthers* and *Aſſaſinations*, either on the *Miniſters* of *Juſtice*, or on the moſt merciful and beſt natured of *Kings*. But *Be aſtoniſhed O ye Heavens*, and *tremble O Earth*, that haſt brought forth ſuch a *Generation of Vipers* who are continually making their way through the Bowels of their Mother, and as we have reaſon to believe have deſigned to deſtroy the Father of their Country. If theſe be the kind embraces of one that pretends to be the *Mother-Church*, if this be the paternal affection of the *Holy Father* at *Rome*, if this indeed be *zeal* for the *Catholick Cauſe*, if this be the way to reconcile us to their Communion, have we not great reaſon to be fond of returning into the *Boſom* of ſuch a *Church* which may ſtrangle us as ſoon as it gets us within her *Arms*? But there are ſome whoſe concernment it is, to make men believe there was no ſuch dangerous plot intended; I meddle not with that evidence which lies before you, but there is one notorious circumſtance obvious to all perſons,

and ſufficient to convince any, which is the horrid Murther actually committed on one of his *Majeſties Juſtices of Peace*, in cold blood, with great contrivance and deliberation. Do men imbrue their hands in blood for nothing? Why no other Perſon, why at ſuch a time, why in ſuch a manner? There was a Reaſon for all this; he had taken the examinations; he knew too much to be ſuffered to live, and they hoped by his death to ſtifle his evidence, and to affrighten others from ſearching too far; and they managed that matter ſo, as though they had a mind to convince the World, they had no other end in taking away his life, but to prevent a further Diſcovery. And they whom his *Death* doth not convince, neither would they be convinced, *though he ſhould riſe again from the Dead.*

God forbid that we ſhould charge ſuch barbarous cruelties, ſuch wicked conſpiracies, ſuch horrid deſigns on all who live in the *Communion* of that *Church*; but we muſt diſtinguiſh between the *ſeduced party* who are not thought fit to be truſted with ſuch things, for fear their Conſciences check at them; and their good nature diſcloſe them; and the buſie *Active Faction*, who are always reſtleſs and deſigning, and act by ſuch *Maxims* of *Morality* as the more ſober and modeſt *Heathens* would abhor. What hath this *Party* of men been doing among us this laſt hundred of years and more, but plotting con-

conſpiracies, inflaming our differences, betraying our liberties, heightning our diſcontents, and in ſhort, undermining the Foundations both of our *Government* and *Religion*? And ſhall ſuch men always triumph that they are too hard for our Laws? and that like the *Canaanites* and *Jebuſites* to the *Children* of *Iſrael*, *they will ſtill be as ſcourges in our ſides, and thorns in our eyes*? If theſe things muſt be, I hope God deſigns it not to deſtroy us at laſt by them, but I am ſure it doth *prove and try us, whether we will hearken to the Commandments of the Lord*, or to the vain Traditions of Men. Joſ. 23. 13.

God knows, I ſpeak not theſe things out of any malice or ill will to the Perſons of any, for, that I may uſe St. *Paul*'s words, *My hearts deſire and prayer to God for them all is, that they might be ſaved.* And although I cannot *bear them witneſs*, yet my hopes are ſome even of theſe may think they have *a zeal for God in all this*; but we are ſure *it is not according to knowledge.* Such a blind zeal as the *Jews* had, who *when they killed the Apoſtles, thought they did God good ſervice.* But it is ſo furious, ſo inhumane, ſo unchriſtian a zeal, that it is charity to them, as well as neceſſary care of our own ſafety, to keep them from a capacity of doing themſelves and others miſchief.

But before I conclude, the *Text* ſuggeſts to us three things, very pertinent to the *duty* of this *Day*; which I ſhall briefly recommend to your conſideration.

1. Mat-

1. Matter of *humiliation* for our *ſins*, as they have an *influence* upon the *Nations ſuffering*.

2. Matter of *Advice*, *Only fear the Lord, and ſerve him in truth, and with all your heart.*

3. Matter of *encouragement*, *For, conſider, what great things he hath done for you.*

1. Matter of *Humiliation* for our *ſins*. Which have been many and great, and aggravated by all the *Mercies* and *Deliverances* which *God* hath vouchſafed to us; and therefore he may be juſtly provoked to puniſh us proportionably to the meaſures of our ingratitude and diſobedience. Let us lay our hands upon our hearts this day, and ſeriouſly conſider *what requital we have made to the Lord for all the benefits he hath beſtowed upon us?* For the Light of his Truth, the Purity of his Worſhip, the Power of his Grace, the frequency of his Sacraments, the influences of his Spirit, and the continuance hitherto of our eſtabliſhed Religion, in ſpite of all oppoſition whatſoever. But have we not been guilty of too much ſlighting that Truth, neglecting that Worſhip, reſiſting that Grace, contemning thoſe Sacraments, quenching that Spirit; and of too great coldneſs and indifferency about matters of Religion? I do not fear that ever the *Church* of *Rome* ſhould prevail among us by ſtrength of Reaſon, or force of Argument, with all its ſpecious colours and pretences, unleſs it be among thoſe who underſtand neither one,

nor

nor the other Religion; but if men be loose in their principles, and unconcerned about *Religion* in general, there will not be courage and constancy enough to keep it out. I do much more fear *Popery* coming in at the back-door of *Atheism* and *Prophaneness*; than under all its false and deceitful pretences of *Universality* and *Infallibility*. And this those have been aware of, who have been so industriously sowing among us the seeds of *Irreligion*; knowing, that if men be unconcerned as to all Religion, they will never have the courage to oppose any; but will be sure to close with the prevailing side. Next to this, I know no greater advantage that they take against us, than from the unnatural heats and unchristian divisions which have been among us. If men were *wise* they would consider, *at least in this our day, the things which do belong to our Peace.* How can men answer it at the great day, if in such a critical time as this is, they stand upon little niceties and punctilios of Honour rather than Conscience, or upon keep up the interests of their several Parties, and do not those things which themselves think they lawfully may do towards an *Union* with us? I pray God, the continuance of these breaches may not look like an argument of Divine Infatuation upon us. But what can we say to that looseness and debauchery of manners, to that riot and luxury, to that wantonness and prophaneness, to that fashion

fashion of customary swearing, and *Atheistick Drollery*, which have been so much and so justly complained of among us? I hope there are many thousands at this day, in *England*, *whose souls abhor the abominations that are committed, and who mourn in secret for them*, and therefore our case may not be so desperate as that of *Jerusalem* was. May we all this day so heartily repent of all these follies and impieties, that the Cause of our Fears which our sins give us being removed, we may hearken

(2.) To the matter of *Advice* here given, *Only to fear the Lord and to serve him in Truth, and with all our heart.*

As though *Samuel* had said, Your hearts stand trembling still at the fear of Gods judgements, when he doth but *lift up his voyce in the Thunder*, and shew his Power in the Rain; I will tell you, how your hearts may *be at ease and quiet from the fear of evil*: Be faithful to God, maintain and practise the true Religion, sincerely, diligently, constantly, universally, and never doubt his protection of you, let your enemies be never so many, or your dangers never so great. Nothing exposes men more to the Wrath and Vengeance of God, nor provokes him more to leave a People to their own counsels, than false-heartedness in Religion and Hypocrisie do. For the Hypocrite thinks to put a trick upon God Almighty; and while he seems to carry it fair towards him, he is dealing underhand

for

for his own security another way: And God is then concerned in honour to let the world see *he will not be mocked*; for he knows how *to take the crafty in their own devices*; and very often brings to nought the most politick fetches of self-design-ing men. For when men seek themselves and not the honour of God or Religion, but are ready to betray what ought to be dearer than their lives, for some mean and private interests of their own, they are oft-times so far from compassing their ends, that they become the Scorn and Reproach of men. But if men preserve their integrity, and *hold fast to the thing that is right*, they preserve their honour, even among their enemies, and either escape troubles, or have the comfort of a good Conscience under them, and however things happen to them for a while, *they are sure to have peace at the last*

3. Lastly, Here is matter of *incouragement*. *For consider what great things he hath done for you. When Jacob was sent into Egypt, and your Fathers cryed unto* v. 8. *the Lord, then the Lord sent Moses and Aaron which brought our Fathers out of Egypt, and made them dwell in this place.* When their sins had brought them into great distresses afterwards, *and they cryed unto the* 9. *Lord and confessed their sins*, then *the Lord raised up* 10. *Jerubbaal and Bedan, and Jephthah, and Samuel, and* 11. *delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every*

side, and you dwelled safe. Now consider, the same God who did those things, can do as great for you still; for his Power, and Wisdom, and Goodness are the same, and therefore you have the greatest reason to put your trust in him at all times, since *he never forsakes them that seek him.* Ps. 9.10.

Blessed be *God* that we have this day a farther argument for us *to fear and serve him in truth, and with all our heart, by considering what great things he hath done for us.* Many deliverances hath he wrought for us time after time, for which we ought still to be thankful, since we yet enjoy the benefit of them. But the memory of former deliverances was almost worn out with many, and some began to question whether such holy and innocent men as the *Fathers* of the *Society* could be guilty of such horrid conspiracies; some were so perswaded of their *Loyalty*, that the Vipers seemed to have changed their natures and to have lost their teeth, and to be a very soft and innocent kind of Creatures. Insomuch, that they were hardly brought to believe there could be a plot among them, especially of so horrid a nature as this appears more and more to have been, when such a viperous brood were suffered not only to lye quiet in the Shade, but to sport themselves in the Sun, and to enjoy the freedom of their own retreats. But God doth bring to light the hidden things of darkness by such wayes as shew

ſhew his Providence, more than our prudence and foreſight, that while we have the comfort, he alone may have the glory of our deliverance. But yet methinks we ſtand as it were upon the brink of a mighty Precipice, which is ſo full of horror, that we tremble to look down from it; we are at preſent held up by a ſtrong hand, but as by one ſingle thread, and can we then think our ſelves ſecure from ſo great a danger?

Bleſſed be *God* for that Unanimity, that Zeal, that Courage, that Conſtancy You have hitherto ſhewed in the maintenance of our *Church* and *Religion*; but there is ſo much yet to be done for a Firm *Eſtabliſhment* of it to all *Generations* (which now by his *Majeſties Gracious* Favour is put into Your hands) as calls for all our Prayers, and your particular Care, leſt if this opportunity be let ſlip, You never have ſuch another.

This ſeems to be an *Honour* reſerved for this *Parliament*, as the *Crown* and *Glory* of all your endeavours for the *Publick Good*. Go on then, to raiſe up this *Monument* to your *Eternal Fame*. This will not only make you beloved and eſteemed by the preſent Age, but this will endear your *Memories* to *Poſterity*, and make *Ages to come riſe up* and call this a *Happy Seſſion*.

But leſt our ſins ſhould yet hinder us from ſo great a *Bleſſing*, We have great reaſon to humble

ourselves before God this day, to bewail those sins which may yet provoke him to punish us, and by Fasting and Prayer to implore his Mercy; that he would go on to preserve his Majesties Person from all violent attempts, our Church and Religion from all the designs of its enemies, and deliver us all from *Unreasonable and Wicked Men.*

FINIS.